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MEMORANDUM

TO: Vermont Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board
FROM: Rebecca Holcombe, Secretary
SUBJECT: Proposed Redirection of AOE School-based Tobacco Use Prevention Grant Funds
DATE: May 6, 2015

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) objects to this transfer of funding because the agency believes it will serve to erode the second year of a two-year grant making process to Vermont schools which would sharply undercut our only effort to fund school-based tobacco use prevention efforts across Vermont.

Additionally the agency believes that such action begs the question about how Vermont will be able to achieve our collective strategic goal of reducing tobacco use from our existing 13% youth use rate to 10% by 2020 with fewer resources committed to this effort.

We urge VTERB to take steps necessary to embrace current research related to school-based tobacco use prevention which both values and validates the impact of such initiatives. We are committed to embracing such research to improve the impact of our efforts and wish to assure the VTERB that such actions are already underway at AOE.

Furthermore, we wish to assure the VTERB that we are launching a renewed effort to collaborate even more closely with the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) with efforts scheduled to begin later this month. We urge VTERB to allow time for AOE and VDH to come together to create new synergies to maximize the strength of community & school efforts across Vermont for 2016-2017. We are confident that together we can structure grant making to maximize positive outcomes especially in the area of youth asset development and policy development, to merely name only a few impactful strategies.

Finally, we wish to remind all that redirection of AOE funds was not the intent of the Governor's budget proposal, and we do not support such a change and we understand from the Vermont Agency of Human Services that they are in agreement with us on this matter.